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THE CONSOLE.*

By Dr. P. F. KRELL.

The Consoles of ancient Christian architecture had the same forms, only still more deteriorated or sometimes simplified, as those of later Classical art; they were applied also for the same purposes, i. e., as supports of cornices, arcades, galleries, tie-beams, etc. The material of which they were made was, very frequently, brick.

In the Romanesque period, Consoles continued to be employed in the same way as in the Classic and ancient Christian art, but their heavy and clumsy projections, constructions corbelled out beyond the face of the wall, such as the spirit of Classical art would have rejected, came into very general use. Thus pilasters and half columns, when required, were not made to reach the ground, but supported by Consoles at about mid-height, or were entirely left out, and in their stead, springings of arches and vaults were corbelled out and supported by projecting blocks usually termed corbels in mediæval architecture. In order to support an upper wall or cornice, Romanesque art was fond of using as decorations at different heights the band of unpierced arcades, supported by corbels, sometimes forming a series of small arches flanked by pilasters, sometimes a single pair set between engaged half or quarter columns.

Corbels are differently shaped according to the number, form and position of the arches and ribs, or according to the nature of the vaults springing from the same level. In the early Romanesque style, the projection from the face of the wall bearing the transverse ribs corresponds with a similar one over the capital of the column, by which means the impost assumes the appearance of a

bracket, thus diminishing the span of the arch. At a later period the bracket level with the impost of the column disappears, while that in the wall continues to be in use. Similar to the way in which the springings of the arch were made to approach each other, the heads of openings were diminished in width, the straight lintel of doorway or window being supported on a corbel in each jamb projecting into the opening.

In almost all the above mentioned positions, the Console requires a different shape from the antique. The principal antique Console, that of the cornice, is a horizontal beam-end, supporting only a little superincumbent weight, and having no thrust to resist; whereas the corbels of Romanesque art, having to accord with an upward-pointing architecture, to support the heavy weight, and meet the thrust of vaults and arches, must be more upright, stronger, and constructed with reference to the several directions in which they are pressed. From these conditions, the primitive form of the Romanesque Console is a pyramid more or less polygonal, generally lofty, or conical ending with either an acute, or obtuse point.

Considering the different sorts individually we are first struck with the Console supporting the small Romanesque arcades which, as we have remarked, appears in two shapes. It presents itself in a more simple and less pretentious form in the continuous series of small unpierced arches. This was at first used in combination with, and underneath the antique crowning cornice replacing the frieze, but by degrees it supplanted the upper antique cornice altogether, being employed both in connection with the principal cornice and in that of the lower stories and string-courses.

* Continued from p. 145 ante.

In these early Romanesque arcade-consoles we perceive the beginning of the great varieties and the fantastic efforts of mediæval art which delighted in ever new changes contrary to the uniformity of the antique. Thus, not only do the corbel-tables show different form and design, but in the richer sort also, the corbels themselves are never like each other. Sometimes plain, but generally ornamented in some way, the corbels, when joined by stilted arches, are perfectly plain on both sides but moulded in front, their profile showing deeply cut hollows, bold rounds or ogees. Sometimes the corbel has a crowning member broken round the three sides. This kind of stilted corbel-table includes also the high and far projecting corbels under parapets and battlements, which are again connected with one another by a row of small arches.

But even if the arches were not stilted, the corbels in the early Romanesque period were generally only moulded in front. They soon however received the three sided pyramidal, or round and conical shape. Fig. 7 represents an arched corbel-table with trefoils, which, though of Gothic origin, has corbels of a simpler form. The richer shape represents either a slender flower-cup or bell, with a plain, high abacus, or low cap-mouldings, or one resembling a bowl with the sides truncated, so as to reduce the upper part to a square; there is also another form which is extremely prevalent very much like this, but with the under part of the bowl cut into round mouldings, often ornamented with foliage, figures or heads. In later times the abacus was omitted, the projection diminished, the corbel simplified till at last it disappeared altogether.

Corbels upon which abut the converging flanks of a double arch, set between two columns or pilasters, have some resemblance to those of the arched corbel-table, but are larger and therefore more developed, while their form corresponds to a certain degree with the capitals of the said columns. They consist therefore of three parts, the abacus, which is commonly quadrangular or composed of bold cap-mouldings, and two parts forming the bell or Console proper, representing together something like the shape of a pear, fig. 6. These two parts are separated by a small necking, consisting generally of an ornamented bead. The second and upper part with its cylindrical lower half corresponds with the Corinthian-like capital, the third and lowest part is the corbel proper supporting the capital-like part in the place of the shaft which is suppressed. Both the bell of the Console and the lower corbel are ornamented with foliage. The Console supporting the pillars which do not reach to the ground, as above mentioned, has a similar form to this third part, but a high slender flower cup and a crowning abacus is often found instead.

The shape of the corbel which forms the support for the springing of vaults and arches does not differ much from that just described, for this reason, that the Romanesque style is not a well developed one. Some deviation begins to show itself in these corbels depending chiefly on the development of pillars and arches, and it

is one which we shall do better to consider in connection with the following Gothic period.

The corbels supporting door lintels fronting but one direction are quite plain on both sides, and moulded on the front, according to the profiles indicated above for the corbels under the small Norman arcades. In more florid architecture, the front is covered with foliage. Fig. 8 is a specimen of it, but taken from the early Gothic.

The foliage which covers the Romanesque corbel in uniformly flat treatment, is a transformation of the Roman acanthus leaf. This motive is here treated in a much less spirited way, as the branches, which are more in the form of tendrils and scrolls than leaves, being entwined in a very stiff and conventional manner, are moulded and carved in a stiff geometrical style of decoration, fig. 6. The material employed is generally freestone.

The Gothic style with its upward, pointed tendencies was an entire deviation in principle from the Romanesque corbelled out constructions in ecclesiastical buildings, but did not disdain to make use of them, wherever they were found suitable. This principle however could only be employed throughout in richly decorated churches; in simpler edifices, for instance, every arch or rib could not be supported by its corresponding column, but recourse was had to the corbel. Thus the principal cornice now lost its corbels, the small arches also disappearing in this place, whereas its motive, especially in filling up of the arch with trefoils as represented in fig. 7, was still much employed. We have already remarked that the corbels supporting pillars, arches, ribs and vaults were to be shaped according to the sections of those details. But then the succession of rectangular recesses of the pillars and arches soon assumed the semi-circular section, and changed afterwards in a combination of alternate rounds and hollows, the latter very deeply cut, and a few small fillets worked on the larger rounds or brought to a sharp edge or keel. In order to support the simple round rib or pillar a smaller corbel was sufficient consisting simply of a crowning intermediary moulding, and a pointed cup or bell, as shown in fig. 13. The abacus is round, like the section of the rib, being indeed cut out from its end. It is a different matter with the corbel which supports compound pillars or a number of ribs descending from their capitals, or springing on the same level and projecting from the face of the wall. Here the Console replaces the capital and must therefore assume a similar section or ground-plan. Consequently this corbel is larger, and, as we have remarked when speaking of the Romanesque corbels, composed of three parts, the lowest of which received, in the Gothic, a more organic connexion with the uppermost one. The abacus indicates in its breaks the number and form of the ribs and pillars, the vegetable types which ornament the bell forming transition to the cylindrical part under the necking.

Fig. 12 represents a Corbel of the early Gothic period on which abut three arches or ribs of rectangular

section. The resulting cruciform abacus consists of a waved moulding, relieved by small fillets and agrees in its profile with the string-course which is broken round the ribs. (At an earlier period in similar cases, the corbel, in order not to break the mouldings, is found above the string-course.) The lower finial stands in an incongruous way detached from the wall; a case which though rare in the early Gothic, frequently occurs in the subsequent periods when we often meet with suspended Consoles hanging quite freely. Fig. 14 shows a Corbel also belonging to the early Gothic, having to support three small cylindrical shafts, forming a clustered or compound pillar. The abacus agrees again in form with the section of the pillar, but at this time it does not form the break of a string-course, but, as the corbel projects beyond a plain wall, its mouldings are considerably thinner. The transition of the broken abacus and bell with the lower finial is not so happily conceived as in the preceding Corbel, the style of foliage decoration being quite different, and not allowing the same vegetable types to be used in the ornamentation of the lower finial as the former. The abacus could no longer follow with its breaks the various rounds and hollows of the sections of ribs and arches, so that in these cases it took the general outline of the principal recesses, i. e., the round and polygonal forms. Fig. 15 shows such a corbel with a polygonal abacus and also a polygonal body. It is true that this bracket was not employed as a support to clustered pillars and arches, but for a statue, though its form is suggested and derived from them. A polygonal form is also to be seen on the corbels placed under the springing of intersecting vaults, as is shown in fig. 10. There is here also a sort of division into three parts, but as no bell of a capital was intended to be ornamented, there is a different proportion between the three parts. The cap-mouldings are more prominent than the bell which appears only as a continuation of the faces of the vault, the lower pyramidal corbel forming the most important division. The bare plain faces of the vault here excluded all ornaments. The pendant trefoils employed here as the only decoration again recall the small Romanesque arches.

What we have hitherto said, had reference principally to the structural form of the Console, so that we have yet to speak of its decoration. In the early Gothic period we again find foliage employed of which the original vegetable type was the acanthus, as is shown in figs. 8, 9 and 12. Contrary to the Romanesque leaf it is treated with great boldness and understanding, but allied to other plant forms and provided with berries of a different kind. The acanthus continues through the whole Gothic style (see figs. 13 and 15), but in a very conventional way, its veins and leaves rising and terminating with a curl or a few small lobes following more the forms of our native plants in the character of the carving. We must consider also, that the material of Gothic architecture, the grey freestone, instead of the Classic marble, required strong projections and deep hollows to produce strong light and shade in order to

render the shapes distinct. But the fantastic middle ages did not stop here. National art assumed a national stamp even to the very details, and sought therefore for new motives. Consequently a great many native plants were brought into play, but considerably conventionalised. One very useful plant was the ivy, fig. 14, which yet allows too much of the bare bell to be seen and does not suffice for the lower corbel; besides, as already remarked, it prevents any organic connexion with the upper part, which we find so beautifully obtained in the acanthus leaf, fig. 12, where the upper bell seems surrounded by a wreath of leaves rising directly from the necking. The mallow is another plant, the leaf of which is used in fig. 8, then the strawberry, the oak, vine, rose, etc. At first these plant decorations clung closely to the body of the corbel, so as to be quite one with it, figs. 12 and 15; afterwards they formed a loose, perforated wreath, while the inner nucleus was much smaller and almost uniformly cylindrical. Often too the single leaves were fixed on the bell in two or more rows, one above the other. By degrees the foliage lost its striking and beautiful effect and was supplanted by the conventional curl and knob. Frequently also we find foliage replaced by emblematical figures or by mere heads. The last debased epoch of Gothic art put a limit to ornamental decoration, and adhered to merely geometrical forms; but in this period Corbels disappeared entirely as supports to ribs and arches. Our preceding considerations have only been directed to the Consoles of Churches, disregarding entirely those supporting the gallery and oriel-window, corbelled-out constructions, which the secular architecture of the middle ages, in which carpentry played a prominent part, could not dispense with. It was in wood buildings especially that bold projections were constructively advantageous. The roof, being considerably extended beyond the walls, needed a support, either by consoles and brackets in the old way or, when too extended, by braces which were treated as consoles. In the interiors of houses the same plan was followed in supporting the beams as with the crowning cornices. The projection of stories one over the other was the more used, as by the weight of the superincumbent story on the projecting beam-ends the bending of the beams was counteracted. The beam-ends were therefore shaped as Consoles, which received a very bold and generally simple profil, by alternating, as in the Romanesque period, deep hollow rounds and fillets, fig. 11. These brackets are perfectly plain on both sides, being only moulded in front, but the motive of the small Romanesque arches is somehow revived again, while frequently an ornamental arch, trefoil, or a sort of vaulted niche is put between the Consoles in order to fill up the space. Sometimes the horizontal timbers above and below the beam-ends are slightly chamfered between the projecting blocks, showing at the lower edge the form of a surbased arch as illustrated in the specimen given. Here an extra bracket is placed below the beam-end, forming with it one high Console. Their decorative treatment is both very easily executed and very suitable for wood-work. The simple

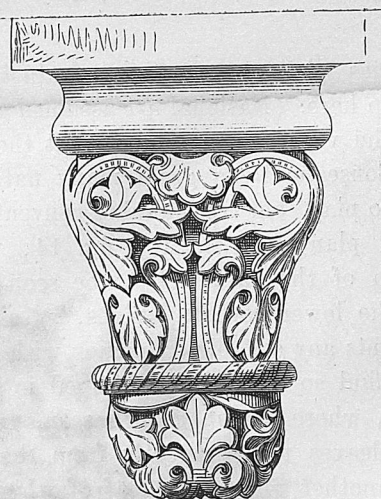


Fig. 6.

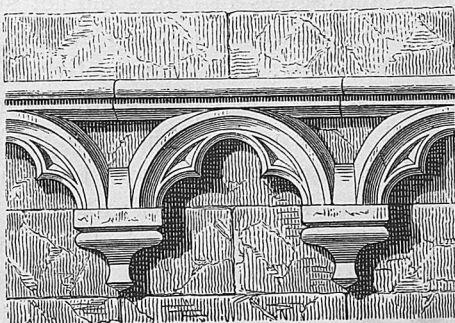


Fig. 7.



Fig. 8.



Fig. 9.

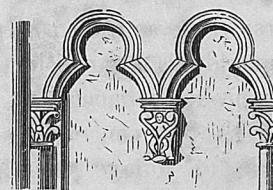


Fig. 7 a.

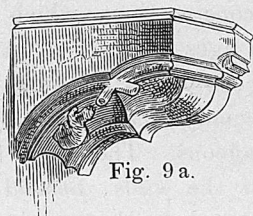


Fig. 9 a.

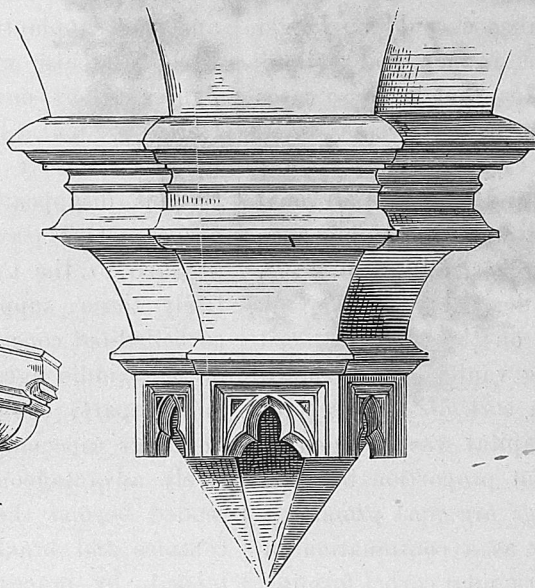


Fig. 10.

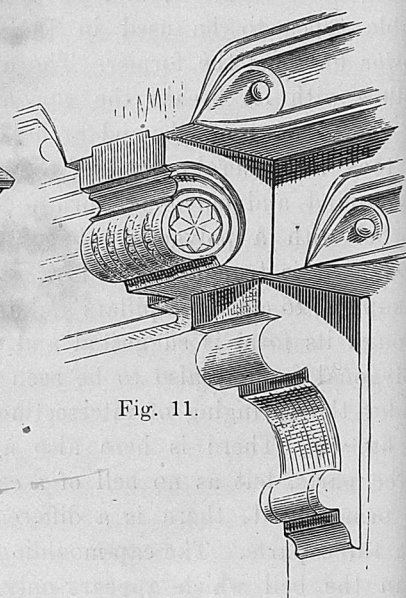


Fig. 11.



Fig. 12.

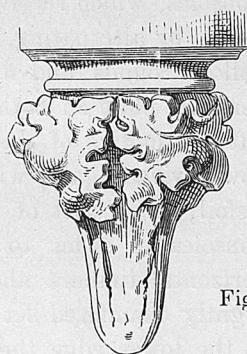


Fig. 13.

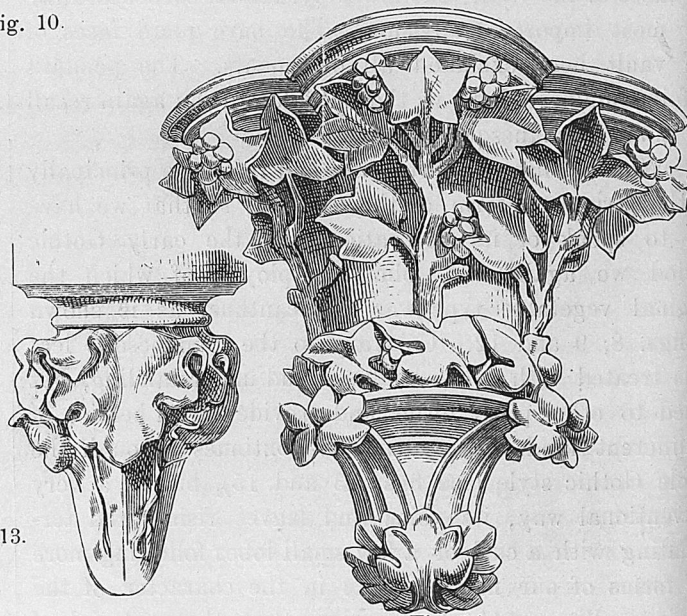


Fig. 14.

- Fig. 6. From the Abbey Church in Werden.
 Fig. 7. Corbel-table in a house at Rheims.
 Fig. 8. Door-jamb corbel from the Church at Montreal.
 Fig. 9. From the Cathedral at Troyes.
 Fig. 10. From the Chapterhouse of the Monastery at Eberbach.

- Fig. 11. From a house at Halberstadt.
 Fig. 12. From St. Martin's Church at Cologne.
 Fig. 13. From the Chair of the Church at Lorch.
 Fig. 14. From the Church of St. Peter Vezelay.

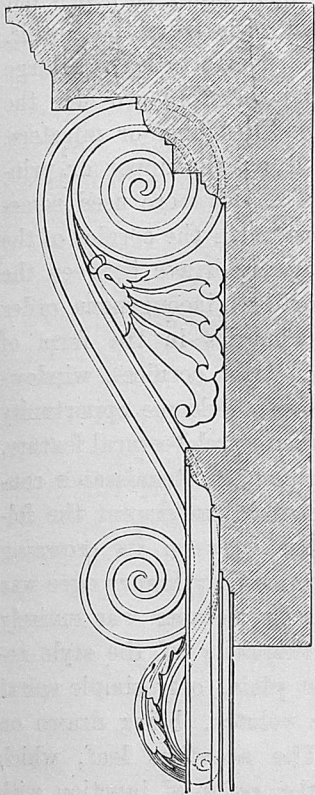


Fig. 16.



Fig. 15.

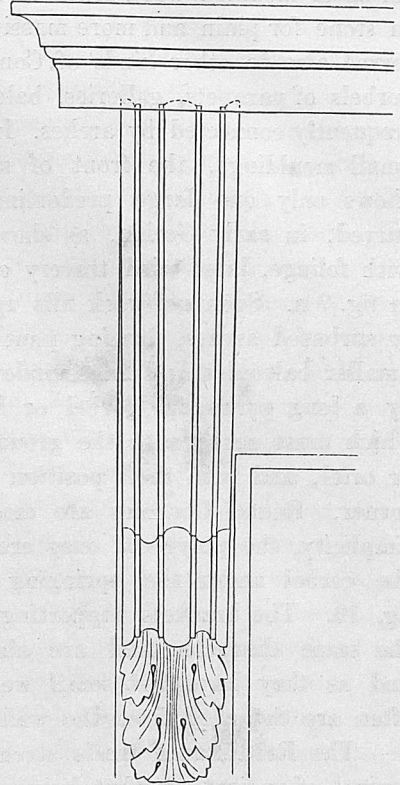


Fig. 16.



Fig. 17.

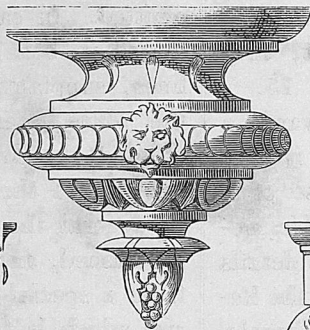


Fig. 18.



Fig. 16 a.

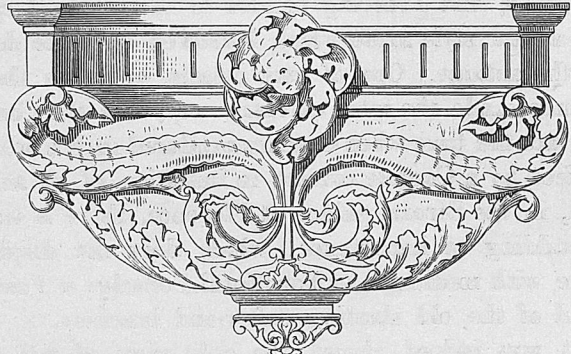


Fig. 19.

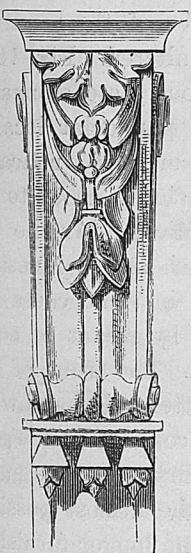


Fig. 21.

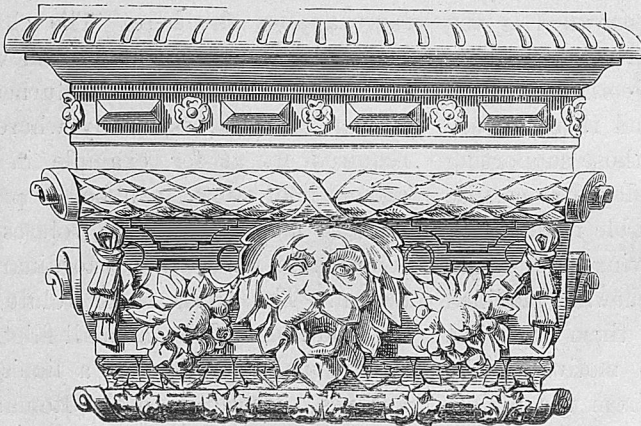


Fig. 20.



Fig. 20.

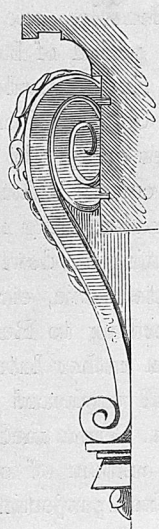


Fig. 21.

Fig. 15. Corbel under a statue from St. Mark, Venice.
 Fig. 16. Console under cornice of door from the Lante Palace, Rome.
 Fig. 17. From the Certosa at Pavia.
 The Workshop. 1870.

Fig. 18. Hanging Console under an engaged column.
 Fig. 19. Pilaster Console from the house of Agnes Sorel in Orleans.
 Fig. 20. From the Castle at Heidelberg.
 Fig. 21. Console of the time of Louis XIII.

forms of moulded wood-brackets are now often imitated in stone for plain and more massive buildings, and transferred also to other kinds of Consoles, for instance, to corbels of parapets, galleries, balcony and oriel-windows, frequently connected by arches. Instead of the numerous small mouldings, the front of such Corbels sometimes shows only one large predominating line, straight or curved, in early Gothic, as shown in fig. 9, decorated with foliage, later with tracery or intersecting ribs, as in fig. 9 a. Such net-work fills up also the semi-circular or surbased arches, forming panels between the corbels. Smaller balconies and oriel-windows are supported also by a long pyramidal corbel or bracket, the shape of which must agree with the ground plan of the balcony or oriel, and with their position on the face of wall or corner. Round Consoles are mostly treated with great simplicity, the polygonal ones are similarly moulded as the corbel under the springing of intersecting vaults, fig. 10. The brackets supporting statues show generally the same character and are almost always octagonal, and as they have but small weights to support, they often are detached from the wall, as seen in fig. 15.

The Renaissance made strenuous efforts towards a revival of ancient art, but being acquainted with it only through Roman productions, and especially those of a late period, and adhering besides to certain Gothic motives, a new style arose which borrowed only the details from the antique. One of such details, of which the Renaissance made the most extensive use, was the Console.

Since the time when Cronaca produced such a wonderful effect by a Console cornice in imitation of an ancient model, in the Strozzi palace at Florence, there is scarcely any building of importance, which does not display a cornice with modillions or horizontal Consoles *à l'antique*, instead of the old slanting rafter-end brackets.

It was indeed almost the only piece of rich decoration which early Italian Renaissance permitted on the exterior. Subsequently, we see on these cornices all sorts of Consoles, one after the other, which prevailed in the last period of Roman art: the cantaliver, the modillon, the simple moulded Console with *cyma reversa* or ogee, the different kinds of volute Consoles, and then the ancones or upright Consoles, in imitation of those supporting the cornice of Ionic doorways, equally employed as cornice Consoles, being marked by an inverted double volute more slanting in downward direction and having the larger volute above, etc., all being naturally somewhat modified according to Renaissance taste. Among them also, but at a rather later period, appeared the motive of the small unpierced arcades, reminiscences from the middle ages. From mediæval art also, the Renaissance borrowed the custom of supporting the springing of arches and vaults, projecting beyond a wall and facing a parallel row of corresponding pillars, upon Consoles. There also the same thing took place as in the Gothic, the Console being at first moulded in exact accordance with the profile of the corresponding capital of the pillar, and only gradually taking an independent form instead of a mere servile copy. There was further to be seen, especially

in domestic architecture, story upon story corbelled out in succession, but in a different style from the Gothic. The more florid Renaissance was averse to leaving large surfaces empty of decoration, and therefore provided the façades with an order of engaged columns or pilasters. These however were only placed on the upper or principal stories, and consequently Consoles were used sometimes under the columns at level with the cornice of the lower story. Also the projecting architrave between the columns or pilasters of more or less incongruous order was frequently supported by Consoles in the form of the keystone of a Roman arch. Door cornices, window-sills, balconies, etc., afforded also a welcome opportunity for the employment of this favorite architectural feature.

As to the particular design of the Renaissance consoles, the horizontal cornice-console underwent the following modifications. Sometimes between its crowning member and the corona an intermediary higher ogee was introduced, or else the crowning member was entirely omitted. In cases where the simplicity of the style required it, both sides were kept plain, only simple spiral lines, supplanting the delicate volutes, being drawn on the plane lateral surfaces. The acanthus leaf, which covered the lower angle at the point of junction with the face of the wall was then replaced by a plain block. In general the number of revolutions of the volutes was diminished, and the edges, if found at all, do not spring from a special centre of any importance, but the outer rim which is the only one carried round, finishes in a small circular disc, or ends as a simple spiral tendril, fig. 16.

The corbels of doors, jambs, window-sills, etc., differ also somewhat from their Roman prototypes. Frequently some members are interposed between the volute and the cornice; sometimes on the contrary, the back of the former is partly concealed by the corona, as is the case in fig. 16. Sometimes also these Consoles project beyond the cornice, and what we have said above of the lateral faces applies also here. The character of the acanthus leaf and other ornaments is somewhat altered. Fig. 16 a.

The better masters returned from these elongated Roman consoles, especially where the particular locality required it, as for example in the massive rusticated ground floor story, to a bolder profile closely allied to the Grecian models; and the volutes of Michael Angelo are remarkable for their extraordinary dash and boldness of design. The small lower volute was in some cases cut off, and replaced by a small fillet, or, by means of some transitional moulding, by a lion's paw. The front of the ancones, according to the Roman pattern, is narrow at the commencement, but not, like that, converging towards the lower end. It was thus that the first step was made towards a creation which attempted the utmost possible expression of life. The back was now no longer furnished with a slight hollow or chamfered channel, but with real flutings, or it was marked by more or less rich and vigorous mouldings, which at a later period were relieved by several ribs or delicate rounds. The scrolls of the volute were gradually drawn out in a spiral form,

as in fig. 21, an example of the Rococo style. Fig. 16, an example of a better period, follows the antique model in this respect.

The tripartite form of the corbel supporting the flanks of arches and vaults which is regulated by the corresponding capitals has the abacus in common with them, fig. 17, the abacus itself being generally part of a string-course broken round the arches, pilasters, etc., which project beyond the face of the wall, fig. 19. This abacus, like that of the Corinthian capital, is slightly concave in plan, and like this has also a flower carved in the centre, unless, as in fig. 17, it is replaced by another projecting corner. Under this abacus the Console appears like a suspended triangle, which is usually flatter and lower than the corresponding Gothic console. The most extended shape is that of fig. 19. The ornamentation admits of almost infinite variety, as may be seen from the three specimens in figs. 17, 19 and 20, consisting chiefly of such Classical motives as the acanthus leaf, festoons of fruit and flowers, figures, heads, animals, shells and other mythological objects with which are blended oriental arabesques in a most tasteful but rather incongruous manner. The material of which the Italian consoles were carved was mostly marble, and the forms were designed with regard to an Italian sky; hence the detail of the ornamental parts are elaborated with exquisite delicacy in their minutest particulars, but

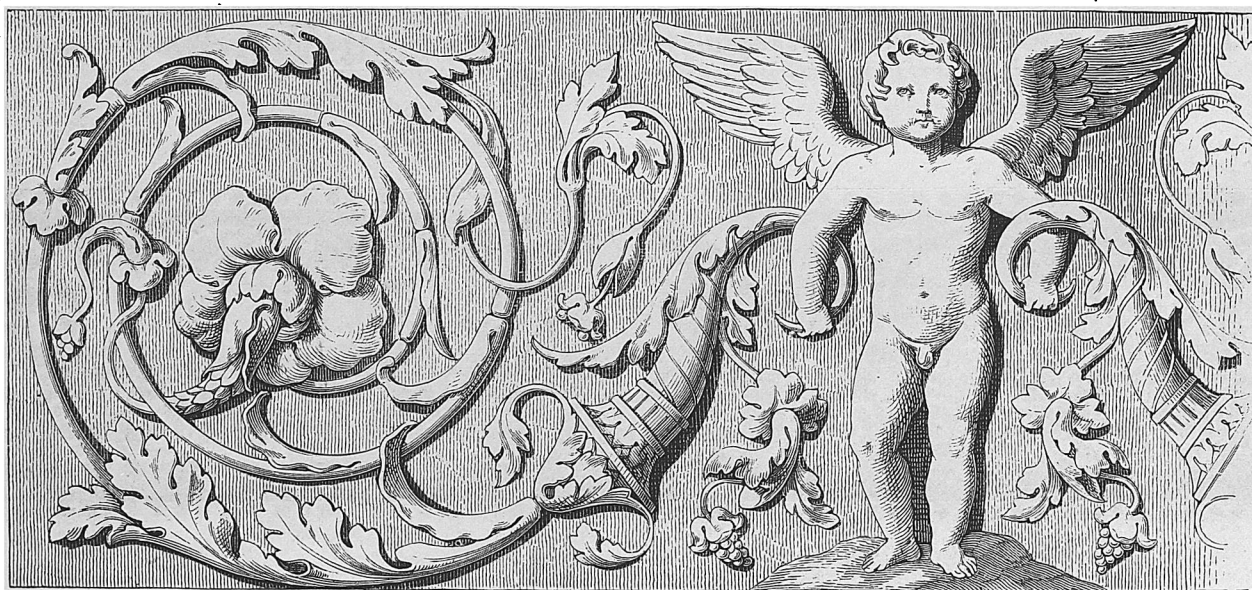
on that very account, the effect of the whole is inferior to that of the Classical ornament which, being of broader character, is also of more striking effect.

Fig. 20 shows a Console of a different shape from the above, being intended to serve as a support of a statue standing in the niche of a pilaster. In Gothic architecture, the form would have been polygonal; the Renaissance, following its predilection for the antique, made it square. The diamond and nail-head pattern under the crowning members as well as the embossed ornaments to the right and left of the lion's head are motives taken from the carved wood-works of a later period which by degrees superseded the more lively ornament of vegetable types.

For the corbels of ribs, as well as for those under the small columns placed in the recesses of window jambs, the Renaissance used a sort of hanging console of a peculiar shape, which it would seem owes its origin to wood carving, fig. 18. Here also antique motives are used for ornamentation; the lion's head, the egg and dart very boldly carved and undercut so as to produce deep shade, and the acanthus leaf, but again with berries, as in the Gothic. With the Renaissance, a very favorite ornament for the round and bead is a row of small circular discs and pearls strung on a cord.

(The conclusion in our next.)

SPECIMENS OF ORNAMENTATION.



No. 1. From Bologna; sixteenth century. Ornament in Marble from Balustrade of Buoncompagni Chapel in San Martino.